THE CITY OF THE GRAIL
& OTHER VERSES

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HENRY E. G. ROPE, M.A.

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THE CITY OF THE GRAIL

AND OTHER VERSES

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BY

HENRY E. G. ROPE, M.A.

AUTHOR OF
"RELIGIONIS ANCILLA," AND "SOUL'S BELFRY"

WITH A FOREWORD BY
ARMEL O'CONNOR

Assit principio sancta Maria meo

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MATRI
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FOREWORD

FATHER ROPE is not so much interested in beautiful words. His passionate and deepest thoughts are centred on the everlasting importance of ultimate Beauty itself; and I feel when reading some of his poems that he has exquisitely, intensely seen and felt. But at such times adequate expression has become an impossibility.

There is often a harshness in his work, but the roughness has its charm of utter sincerity. He lets us know how much he has received—and how great is his love of forests, ancient Christian cities and churches, and above all his fellow-men. He is striving, whole-heartedly and humbly, to "let Christ discover Christ" everywhere. A cursory reader of his work might judge him to be haunted by the past, lost amidst the glories of mediæval times, and out of touch with peoples and places of the present day. But this opinion would be mistaken. Father Rope is longing for the Light of the World to be more and more apprehended and welcomed. His concern is with the Absolute, that which is beauty and the source of everything lovely and of good report.

The heart and soul's hunger is constantly revealed in his poems, and one knows that such a hunger can only be appeased in a perfect world. To anyone so sensitive suffering is inevitable—but a suffering that is accepted, that does not deny him an abiding peace and a real and frequent joy. The poet shows that a soul's longing is something above dissatisfaction. Ugliness horrifies him, but he accepts the truth—and his pleading is ever at one with his thanks.

ARMEL O'CONNOR.

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"Iff I hadde cunnyng and eloquens
My conceytes craftely to dilate
As whilom hadde the firsh (? first) rethoryens
Gowere, Chauncere, and now Lytgate."

BOKENHAM, *Seyntys* ii., Prol. 1-4.

THE CITY OF THE GRAIL

PILGRIM :

WHERE lies the city of the Holy Grail,
And who will guide me thither ?
For spent with sorrow, oft at point to fail
The heart doth sink, the holy purpose wither.

Where shall I find the city, by what token
Know her for Heaven's chosen,
Way-weary oftentimes and nigh heart-broken,
Beset with robber fiends that lure and cozen ?

The city high-uplifted o'er the plain,
Dawn-girdled, starry-crown'd,
Whose bells sink down upon the world like rain—
In this sad fleeting world may she be found ?

ANGEL :

The city of the Grail abides in Heaven,
With sorrow unacquainted,
Yet many a foreglimpse on this earth is given,
This earth so many-troubled, many-sainted.

The city of the Grail is God's own palace,
And needs not sun or moon,
But manifold amid earth's recreant malice
Reflections of her mirror'd light are strewn.

Dear child, how oft beside me hast thou stept
To these most holy places,
And oftentimes the heart within thee leapt
Born on the wave of high accepted graces.

THE CITY OF THE GRAIL

How many a belfried eyrie saw we lifted
Rock-pillar'd in the sky,
Forth-gazing like a watchtower o'er the rifted
Brave mountain-heart of elder Italy,

And Norman river-valleys husht at even,
And Kerry's haunted shore—
To win thee forward were these shadows given
Until the light shall dawn for evermore.

THE CYNICS ROUTED

(ST. WALBURGA'S SCHOOL, PLOWDEN)

THEY tell me years bring bitter disillusion,
They bid me put no faith in humankind,
They say that zeal is foolish, hope is blind.

Ah! then some childish voice in laughter ringing,
Some childish face a light from Heaven bringing
Swift scatters all their counsels in confusion.

Dear Plowden children, when I hear your voices,
Your glad and guileless faces when I see,
I scorn these thoughts and laugh to see them flee.

The fields, the very walls awake and sing:
"Of such is Heaven's Kingdom," saith the King.
"Of these and such as these His deathless choice is."

ROSSNAREE

I LOVE their story who before the light
Of them that brought good tidings had enray'd
The mountains with its glory, in the night
Of starry splendour, wistful watch'd and pray'd
That He Who made them would Himself reveal
And send some prophet with the words of heal.

They fled from revel, gladly left the throng,
And climb'd the lonely watchtower of the soul,
The hosts of Heaven o'er them wheel'd in song,
And waves of silence would about them roll,
Wherein far echoes they might oft discern
Of God's own word and harmony eterne.

Of such were they who waited for the star
Amid the Persian mountains long ago;
(Beyond the desert, disenchain'd of war,
The prone world slept, unconscious of her woe);
Such Cormac, who in silent Rossnaree
Watch'd the dawn glimmer o'er the Irish Sea.

"NO ABIDING CITY

(BELMONT, SEPTEMBER, 1918)

BESIDE the rampart ridge of Wales, that bears
The sagging curtain of the clouds, inflow
The tideways of the golden afterglow,
And purple-grey invests the mountain-stairs;

Where under English skies the hallow'd chime
Of Belmont metes the life of day on day
With Gabriel's greeting to the Mother-May,
Who lit with Heaven the dark abyss of time.

Time was methought indeed 'twere very bliss
To wander freely in and out among
The many clustered spires that raise their song
O'er many a city, many a wilderness.

Again methought I could for ever stay
At Chartres, beneath her branchy-pillar'd shrine,
And watch the fiery lanterns disentwine
In colour'd strands the sunset's golden ray.

To wander all the summers till hoar eld,
To study all the winters and to write
In some dark wainscot chamber world-withheld,
With glowing logs and homely lamp alight;

To watch a world with new-won beauty rife—
Ah! yes, to watch, to wander, and to dream,
To shun the cross, to choose my path, my life
To shape at will, save sin. Right fair did seem

"NO ABIDING CITY"

The landscape, and the poplar-border'd road
Linking the tower'd thorps and cities grey.
Oh, blind to seek in shadows mine abode,
Pale shadows cast by sempiternal day !

Lord, keep mine feet in Thine appointed way.

CAN A MOTHER FORGET?

A SAINTLY mother's watchful love is such
Fathom or mete it may no human word,
More sure than sight, ah! who can say how much
More true than any speech of nature heard!

This hast thou known, my soul, these many years,
All that grace-quickened mother-love can be
And all of good the Infinite God enspheres
This love is in Him, and He loveth thee!

THE STRIKE DESIRABLE

BENEATH the winter sky the darkening street
Of Clun with here and there a glimmer shone
From lamp or hearth the glistening snow upon.
A stranger workman 'twas my chance to meet.

"How quiet is this place, how sleepy, dead!
To one who from the cities newly comes,
As I have done, where life industrial hums,
It seems a very prison-house," he said.

What wouldst thou, friend? Stunn'd with incessant strife,
With hideous sights and sounds by night and day
Encompass'd, too engross'd to think or pray—
God grant thee to revolt and claim thy life.

FLUENCY

WHEN I was young, my pen was ready,
And swiftly flow'd my speech,
A wandering mind, and will unsteady,
Less prone to learn than teach.
At ease I wrote and at ease I sung,
For words came ready to my tongue,
When I was young.

Now youth is gone, my pen moves slowly,
And check'd is fancy's rein,
Known ignorance perforce makes lowly,
I write and sing with pain,
With care I write, and with care I con;
The narrow track I cling upon,
Now youth is gone.

VAL D'OSSOLA

(JUNE, 1912)

ACROSS the long wide vale of Ossola
The lone white churches answer chime to chime,
Strange circling chimes with jangling undertones
Of sorrow and penitential pain,
The passing bells of time
Down-wandering from afar
Across the road and streamside stones
From forest unto forest in the rain.
Since that grey afternoon
Wax'd and wan'd hath many a moon,
Yet ever and again
Marching thro' life I hear and see
The lone-bells high-withdrawn, yet near
As death to life, eternity to time,
The grey clouds clinging to each mountain-side,
The sternly circling chime,
Notes of mystery and fear
And doomful monody,
Yet mingling hope and gladness in their tones,
Along life's midway road unfailingly,
Over time's river marge of stones—
Spirit voices, near yet far,
Across the vale of Ossola,
The valley long and wide.

BELLA TOLLA, IN THE VALAIS

(JULY, 1914)

THE tall white pyramids upshoot in air,
The high blue realms of heaven they invade;
Their ridges clamber like a snowy stair
And take the walls of cloud with escalade.

Far down, the Rhone goes wending through the plain
And purple bloom invests the rampart slopes
Whose shoulders bear the browning vineyard's hopes
Between the pastures and the plots of grain.

From plain to pastures under snowy heaven,
From rocky torrent unto sailèd mere,
The rood o'er crag and croft and path; at even
And morn and undern Gabriel's greeting given—
The life ordain'd of every age is here.

AUTHORSHIP

PEREANT qui ante nos
Nostra dixerint. Alas!
Projects oft before me rose
Destin'd ne'er to come to pass.
Strangers enter'd in and stole,
All unwittingly, my schemes;
Strode at leisure to my goal,
Leaving me my barren dreams.
Truths forgotten, truths neglected,
Truths derided they proclaim.
Long before them I detected
All that now exalts their name.
Little reck they of their debt
All unwittingly incurred—
Ill befits thee, soul, to fret,
Why this jealousy absurd?
Foolish one, is truth thine own?
What then, *modo sint sincera*,
Skills by whom they be made known,
So the *nostra* be but *vera?*

"DE GUSTIBUS"

THE blindness of a jealous love
Had seal'd mine eyes and shut mine heart
To all but mediæval art,
Tho' oft for justice reason strove.

And in the very heart of Rome
I sigh'd for soaring-vaulted choirs,
Sapphire and ruby window fires,
And grudg'd the praise of Peter's dome.

Me evermore the nightly skies,
The spires that chant amid the throng
Of stars their never-ending song
Of praise and suppliant litanies,

Allur'd, sky-scaling jets of stone;
And memory evermore would stay
By dreaming roofs on eves of May
To watch their shadows steeply thrown

Above the climbing houses, walls,
And hanging garden, slype and stair,
From heaven's canopy to where
Moon-silver'd Eure slow-lapsing falls

By Chartres, the city silver-grey
Amid the tawny plains of Beauce;
Or sought the houses huddled close
Beneath the daring of Beauvais;

Or village church, or gabled cot
With orchards girdled, far-withdrawn
Brook-valley, heath, or forest lawn,
Or country cheaping world-forgot;

And factious oft, in alien mood,
I pass'd some Roman altar-shrine
To cavil at the form and line,
And lose, ah, fool! the grace withstood.

Long after, I awoke to find
How art, thro' all her forms, is one,
And spires of France, in unison
With Buonarroti's dome combin'd,

Soar upward; one liturgic smoke
From one same censer blended climbs
From all the nations and the times
Unto His feet who bore our yoke,

Who heal'd us with His stripes, who tries
The heart and reins, and none reproves
That single-hearted strives and loves
The honour of His sanctuaries.

DREAM-MINSTER

(TO M. A. R.)

WERE I the church-designer,
And you the window-wright,
We'd set the stones a-climbing
And start the bells a-chiming;
Nor Chartres should be diviner,
Nor Beauvais pass in height;
Were I the church-designer
And you the window-wright.

A MODERN TYRE

THE huge grey waste of smoky wharf and yard,
The barren bravery of mart and street,
Sad hurry of unresting anxious feet—
Imperious is the city, proud and hard.

The England that we knew, shall she go down,
The England of the thorp and country town,
Before the upstart and supplanteress?
Shall all traditions wither at her frown,
And all things fade she deigneth not to bless?

Yea, shall no human leisure overlive
The torment of her gain-inciting goad?
Shall never human gladness token give?
Nor careless children sing beside the road?

The mighty city reacheth out for miles,
Her hand is on the waters and the ways,
She gathers in the countrysides and smiles
To see them shrink and blench beneath her gaze.

Shall not some prophet rise up presently,
Confront her cruel eyes with fearless mien,
And in God's name lift up his voice and cry:
"I tell thee that thy doom is set, O Queen,
The writing goeth forth upon the wall,
Thy glory is at very point to fall"?

The gainful city at the last shall go,
For all she loometh terrible and great;
I know not how her strength shall be brought low,
Nor what men shall her surquedry amate;
Yet hope burns brighter as I bend my gaze
Where her own sons go marching down her ways.

They con not book within the school of gain ;
They have a cause beyond the city's cause ;
In them forgotten virtues breathe again,
And knightly valour moves to knightly laws ;
In them behold a token of the hour,
When covetise shall vail her pride and power.

BY SAIGHTON GRANGE

DARK sandstone walls that crown the little slope
Look forth upon the Western front of Wales,
The mountain-warded realm of hidden hope,
Yet mindful of her ancient minstrelsy;
And on the verge the mighty crest upstands
Of Moel Fammau, looking o'er the lands
Whereover blue autumnal eve prevails.
Midmost the wide and gentle plain of Dee
The pile of Eaton gathers into towers,
All emulous of mediæval choirs,
And gives a voice to all her woods and streams.
And high above the topmost lantern gleams,
The agate mirror of the sunset fires;
Nature and art herein have join'd their powers;
The plain gives echo to the glowing west,
And Saighton knoll wins speech of yonder crest.

A WALK IN CHESHIRE

(September 25, 1917)

At noon the sun was throned high,
Unclouded late September's sky,
And faintly touch'd the woods with flame
When past Vale Royal's barred gate
(Our Lady's cloister desolate)
By shining Weaver's bank I came.

O'er bracken-gladden'd waterside
Linger'd the smile of summertide;
The rushes flower'd russet-brown,
The moorhen fled across the pool,
And ever radiant, clear and cool,
Blue heaven on windswept earth lookt down.

By Bradford mill did harebells shy
In blueness with geraniums vie;
The long lane wander'd on unseen
To hidden Whitegate's folded leas;
Like Gothic choirs the tall beech-trees
Rose pillar-wise o'er Foxwist Green;

And through a hedge-gap shimmered near
The silver blue of Budworth mere.
So pass'd I Oulton's forest ride,
Rich orchards, timber'd cots and lanes,
Late sheaves uplifted on the wains,
And Tarporley at eventide;

Till by an ambush of the west
The royal sun was dispossest,
Born into cloud-captivity;
While Beeston Castle, gaunt and stark,
Fronted the foray of the dark;
Lamps kindled in the hostelry;

Till in the lanes that rose and sank
'Twixt Bunbury and Tilstone Bank,
Swift herald of oncoming rain,
The breeze of even wander'd, blent
With balsam poplar's breath, and went
Upon its way to soothe and sain.

VICINÆ NESCIUS URBIS

"FRIEND, art thou less than man, who carest naught
For things wherein we others solace find
And recreation? Thee the busy street
Appals, thou shrinkest from the jostling crowd
Of cities full of zeal and enterprise.
Nor social games appeal, nay, thou dost spurn
With evident horror desultory speech
And pastime. Hast thou, then, a secret source
Of rest and consolation? We would know."

* * * * * *

A winding lane beneath a night of stars,
A sigh athwart the pine-trees and the sound
Of lonely waters chaunting endlessly,
And violet-purple under hooded mist,
The flanks of Longmynd in the rainy Spring.

IN THE CAMPAGNA

(TO C. B. W.)

WE who have stood on castle walls together
On old Bracciano's streetways looking down,
And seen the lads stand laughing in the belfry
And clash the echoes o'er the little town,
And watch'd blue wood-smoke from the house-roofs rising
Of lichen'd tiles, and many a loaded wain
Beneath the piles of brushwood slow and stately
Come creaking up the country roads amain;
And watch'd the level waters blue and silver
A-shimmer under winter's noonday sun,
Far down below the plunging steep and terrace,
Whereover flying-footed shadows run,
And, clad about with forest, crown'd with city,
Rocca Romana rising from the mere,
And Anguillara fronting Trevignano
On little headlands standing silver clear;
We who have wander'd o'er the wild campagna,
Thro' windblown oats about our heads asway,
Thro' lanes of wheat in lone Cremera valley
A-swelter in the afternoons of May,
And gather'd broken marble in the sheepfolds
On cliff-defended Veii's lifted plain,
And track'd the infant river to La Storta,
Thro' copses starr'd with purple cyclamen;
We who have forded hidden streams together
And follow'd water-courses for our guide,
And stood upon the peak of lone Soracte
Above sun-flooded wildernesses wide;
We who have started serpents at Galera,
And climb'd the olive steeps of Tivoli,

And from the Monte Porzio terrace hearken'd
The Angelus of Monte Compatri ;
Shall not we two together hear and see them
Caught up in sempiternal unity,
The sunlight and the starlight and the music,
The flooding skies and lands and sapphire sea ?

"EVER ROAMING WITH A HUNGRY HEART"

TO wander o'er the wide earth every way,
To track a myriad rivers to their spring,
From myriad peaks to watch the birth of day,
To sleep beneath the forest's murmuring,
To gaze on many a month and year of nights
Into the darkness of the starry heights;

To read the sum of gladsome poesies
That tell the glory of creation fair,
And evermore to read anew and seize
Each aspect and each symbol everywhere
Of whatsoever building on the earth
From times of faith and knighthood draws its birth;

So, without sin, I might but feed upon
The simple joys whereto my nature lean'd,
And store in heart's possession one by one
The Longmynd glens, the lonely waters screen'd
By woodlands in the Shropshire uplands wild
That still give mother-welcome to their child;

So I might range the circuit, year on year,
Of all the crown of minsters crowning France,
And thousands of the churches scatter'd near
And far thro' all her ample dominance,
And wander thro' the Gothic world-domain,
Norway to Cyprus, Sicily to Spain;

So with Thy blessing, Lord, I might have these,
Joys blameless and God-given, serving Thee,
And mark the course with hidden charities,
Ah! surely then the days Thou gavest me,
Season'd with sorrows that Thy grace made dear,
To one thanksgiving flame would taper clear.

"Do I not know who drank for thee the gall,
Thy bitter disappointments and thy woes,
Thy weary heart, thy spirit prone to fall,
What magic spell the winds upon thee blow,
Who plann'd and guarded step by step the way
To lead thee, child, into eternal day?

"Have I not died for thee, my wayward son?
Would I not die again for only thee?
My Absolon, my little Absolon,
In whom wilt put thy trust, distrusting Me?
My child, if guideless thou persist to roam,
How wilt thou reach, how wilt thou find thy home?

"Far wilder than thou dreamest are the moors,
Darker the mists, more perilous the mire;
In sudden clefts the headlong torrent roars,
Black whirlwinds sweep the summits of desire.
O child, by fancy led, unheeding scathe,
Thy Father knows, Who fenc'd thy way from death."

Lord, I implore Thee from my inmost soul.
Lord, for myself against myself I pray,
Me in my very own despite control;
My heart's petitions graciously gainsay;
Surely Thy very crown of mercies were
To save me from my own beseeching prayer.

A SUNSET

(EPIPHANY, 1907)

THE marshall'd cloud-flakes glowing sorrel-red
Now in grey-purple slowly fade away;
Slowly disbands itself that bright array,
And star by star the night encamps o'erhead.
The western hills lean backward into light;
And I bethink me how in childhood's day
I fancied Heaven in the distance lay
Somewhere far back and up, beyond the sight,
O'er these same hills. Nor is it chance, I ween,
That brings the memory of this thought again,
Nor count I the thought's self as wholly vain.
Dreams? I know only that this poor dream-right
I would not change for all that lens hath seen,
No, not for all the lore of Newton's brain.

THINGS TEMPORAL

I DREAM'D that I should live, and lo! I wake
To find in midmost life the seal of death
On all wherein sweet solace I would take,
I hear his coming feet, I feel his breath.

And whatso years or days to me remain,
Are surely number'd in a little tale.
I fell adream a youth and wake again
To find the firm earth underneath me fail.

I stand upon a tuft amid the marish,
Beholding like the drifted *canawan*
Lives, cities, states float by me, fall and perish.
What boots it now the wafted down to scan?

The belfried cities perched like eyries lonely,
Whose far-heard bells ensoul bleak Apennine—
Their story merges in time's current, only
The echo'd anthem of their bells is mine.

Yea, surely it were very sweet to linger,
And watch the colour'd pageant of the past
From form to form change with the changing singer,
Would youth and leisure yet one moment last.

Ah! no, I hear these very belfry voices
Urge me to hasten on the lonely way;
"Oh, call'd of God," they ring, "your deathless choice is
To follow upward to the close of day.

"Dare not to stay here, hasten, even's shadow
Soon, soon will be upon the climbing track.
This was the voice of tower, tree and meadow,
Of wind and water. Hasten, look not back.

"This is our voice, that thou must leave us, keeping
Our word, faint echo of the word eterne;
Haste, struggle onward to the chime unsleeping,
Each longing wistful thought to Godward turn.

"Romance, adventure, strange remote wild places,
And lonely ways, wide thronging skies at even—
Use well the beacon lights, the passing graces
That rouse and call and beckon unto Heaven."

TO AN IRISH CHILD

O CHILD of Eire, what wilt thou hold dear?
The sights, the sounds of garish Babylon?
The praises of her servants wouldst thou hear,
Forgetting Sion and her woes o'ergone,
The thorny path her generations trod,
The royal highway of the Cross of God?

Nay, let the humble sheiling be thrice dear
To thee, and dear its valiant poverty,
O'ercanopied with starry heights austere,
And guarded by the ocean's purity.
The Cross of Eire fix thine heart upon,
And give thy prayer to poor proud Babylon.

"SO LONG THY POWER HATH LED ME, SURE IT STILL WILL LEAD ME ON"

WHEN I look back upon the bygone years,
While up the slope of middle life I climb,
From out the youthful mazes there appears
The order'd landscape of my sojourn-time.

The destin'd track far-winding up the vale
Or under lea of forest stands reveal'd,
Yet while I walkt it might I ne'er avail
To glimpse beforehand what each bend conceal'd.

And well for me this course divinely best,
Who learn so late, ah, God, how late, that still
Obeisance is the venture and the quest,
And true romance and songcraft in His Will.

BENEDICT XV.

SOLE voice of peace amid the raging sea
Of hate, and slaughter, cries and countercries
Of stricken, bought and sold humanity,
Sole voice of truth amid the storm of lies.

Sole voice of love amid the roar of hate
That sunders race from race and man from man,
When all the thoughtless world is desolate
Sole king and seer the Law of God to scan.

His Law thou meditating day and night
Unto a blind bewilder'd world dost speak,
Unwearied, swerving never left or right,
Blessing, and blest, rock-steadfast, valiant, meek.

AFTERWORD

To Peter's rock that stands alone unshaken
  Amid the all-obliterating flood,
Cling conquer'd peoples of the world forsaken
  That covet not dominion, wealth or blood.

O lonely peak, the whelming waves above,
  Who thirst for justice turn their eyes to thee,
Source of undying faith, undying love,
  Across the ruin'd lands and wreckful sea.

ON READING "LITTLE WINGS"

CHILDHOOD and poesy are the selfsame,
Childhood and poesy are holy ground ;
Comes thereanigh no cognisance of blame,
No folly, nothing false therein is found,

Open to all the firmament of Heaven,
The winds, the stars, the forests, moon and sun,
Like Francis' heart to hymn our sisters given
And brothers in the ever-living One.

Ah, let no vapours from the citied plain
Upclimb these heights Alvernian, or invade
With random craving or with image vain
The free glad mind of dedicated maid.

Yea, dedicate is God's sweet chorister,
To serve Him in the holy choir of song ;
Let not the babbling world importune her
Whose time, whose thoughts, whose words to God belong.

"WHITHER IS FLED THE VISIONARY GLEAM?"

SO many a valley clad with waving wood,
So many a hollow echoing with streams,
So many hills—fair and exceeding good,
The lonely, quiet countryside, meseems.

So full of peace, so full of poesy
Alluring one to wander at sweet will.
But ah! how faintly stirreth now in me
Desire to fare beyond each far-seen hill.

Something hath vanisht more than vanisht years,
Something there lacks that I was wont to find,
The call that beckon'd o'er horizon'd ways
To-day but faintly stirreth heart or mind.

For then to me 'twas very Arcady
With little hamlets world-withdrawn o'ersown;
The gabled cots my careless fantasy
Had fill'd with kindly people world-unknown.

Yea, but a while ago that land without
Seem'd from the student's tower passing fair,
Busy the immemorial tasks about,
Remote from noise, withdrawn from city care.

Elsewhere might scandal ravage, sin defile,
But here, I dream'd, would seldom penetrate
The tyrant passions, grosser forms of guile,
The tongues that bicker, envy, slander, hate.

Too simple or too thoughtless, unaware
I wove a fairy legend o'er the land.
The pageantry of all the uplands there
In one dream holiday would oft expand.

Only the vesture saw I, not the life,
The care, the daily struggle, gain and loss.
Wide is the world with hill-recesses rife,
But wider yet the shadow of the Cross.

THE WRITER'S SERVICE

IN youth I plann'd to strike with dauntless spear
The painted idols that the crowds ador'd ;
Mechania's gorgon head I thought to shear,
The kindly ways of life to see restor'd.

But unaware I sought my own behoof,
And hindrance after hindrance unforeseen
(Occasion nearing ever held aloof)
Uprose myself and my emprise between.

Years after, others younger far arose,
Took up the plans I cherisht, pass'd me by,
Unknowing and uncaring, smote our foes,
And gather'd fame in many a victory.

Thus hast Thou taught me, Lord. "Thou shalt not reap
The fame thou wouldst. In mercy I denied.
The cause thou lovest, this shall onward sweep
In triumph, thou unknown, unthankt abide.

"Not vain thy hopes and striving, nor unblest,
What though thy handwork scantly may appear,
Strive only single-hearted ; leave the rest;
Well dies the soldier knowing victory near."

RETROSPECT

WAS it indeed myself
That dream'd and wander'd twenty years ago,
And led that life so strange, directionless?
Was it myself?

Far, far, ahead, meseem'd,
Horizons stretcht of high uplifted snow,
Beyond the world's romantic wilderness
Whereof I dream'd.

Was it indeed this I?
The track climbs steeply, lo! the goal in view,
And clear beneath the winding road lies bare
I travell'd by.

The same, yet not the same,
All chang'd around me, chang'd am I thereto,
Who needs must cross the river circling there,
Of cleansing flame.

IN MEMORIAM

(R. F. EKINS)

BUT yesterday we watch'd St. Peter's fountains
Toss rainbow-woven waters in the sun:
But yesterday the sun-swept cirque of mountains
From terrac'd Tivoli we gazed upon;
'Mid olive slopes we held our way
But yesterday.

But yester-year on many and many an even,
We converse held and solace gave and took,
Ranging all themes of life and earth and heaven,
What time the world with crash of carnage shook.
Ah! memories thrice dear
Of yester-year.

In Rome the giver thou, receiver I,
O generous soul, ever alert and swift
To hearten counsel with wise charity,
Heal soul and mind with some well-chosen gift.
Our souls had found their home
In Rome, in Rome.

To-day, to-day, the cruel tidings smite;
Thou hast left Rome and earth and me behind,
The Holy Mass for God's accepted knight
I offer. Ah! in heaven of me have mind,
Thrice friend henceforth for aye
To-day, to-day.

EPIPHANYTIDE, 1921

LO ! with Epiphany, the dawn of Spring,
The ground with tender golden aconite
(Aloof on topmost bough the stormcocks sing),
The barren ground is sudden starr'd with light.

By wayside banks peeps shyly here and there,
With her pale gleam the little celandine.
The Spring comes silent-flooding everywhere,
The purpling woods her far approach divine.

Ah ! may she 'stablish this her conquest fast,
And winter's iron empire overthrow,
And oh ! this very year may Spring at last
See Erin rescued from her agelong woe,

See Erin freed, nay more, a gracious queen
Ruling her land in radiant majesty,
Mother of saint and scholar, fair, serene,
More glorious from her long captivity.

Mother of martyrs, mother of my heart,
Mother of courtesy and comely speech,
At last the world shall see thee as thou art,
At last the world shall learn and thou shalt teach,

How fair and royal is humility,
How vile the pride and power thy foes ador'd,
Thy children's faith alone is victory,
The lives they lose live ever in the Lord.

THE ARMY OF CHRIST

(Whit-Friday Procession, Manchester, 1920)

WHY makes the mighty city holiday?
Why is the torrent of her traffic still?
And who are these her silent streets that fill?
What means this banner'd host in bright array?

Yestreen the tide of wheels and humankind
Surg'd fiercely on thro' every creek and bay.
Into a gentle murmur far away
That stormy sea hath suddenly declin'd.

White-raimented they walk with steps serene,
And bear in triumph high uprais'd the Rood,
While banner after banner unsubdu'd
Proclaims the reign of Christ and Heaven's Queen.

Mammon and Mars have vanisht, yielding place
Unto the Crucified. Well might we deem
To-day a vision or a waking dream,
Some past return'd, some future flood of grace.

And who are these His soldiers that advance
To take this day possession in His name—
Lord God! amid a world's apostate shame
With hymn and orison for sword and lance?

"A little child shall lead them." Unbeguil'd,
Behold whereof God's kingdom aye shall be,
Lo! single-minded pure simplicity,
The world-subduing power, a little child.

"IM GANZEN, GUTEN, SCHÖNEN"

I LONG'D erewhile to miss
No bliss;
I long'd to taste completeness
Of sweetness.

I long'd to behold and indwell them,
Each several woodland and stream,
I long'd to glean and upgather
The leasings of glamour and dream,
I long'd to upgather and deal them,
And win the wide world to give ear
To the pulse of the starry heavens,
The ripple of wooded mere,
The ocean of sky they regard not,
The waves of the windy land,
The splendours and perils they know not,
The bliss they will not understand.

FLOS PARADISI

(MY LITTLE NEPHEW, H. A. H. V., BORN JULY 8, DIED JULY 10, 1921)

HE smiles, small Ambrose, in his narrow bed.
He left us with his little word unsaid,
Our Lady's medal claspt in tiny hands.
He smiles, he sees, he understands.

Mere babe he is not, his the thoughtful brow
Of faith long tried and proven, love intense,
Some aged saint in him, we know not how,
Is one with new-born innocence.

Ah, little Ambrose, in God's home eterne,
Thou pleadest ever, in Heaven's litanies,
Thy parents' cross, torn hearts that bleed and burn,
Twice theirs since now for ever His.

July 13, 1921.

TO IRELAND

EIRE, my mother, a boon I crave now,
Take me, and take this heart of mine,
Teach me thy secret, mother belovèd,
Teach me a love of the Cross like thine.

Land of my soul art thou and surely,
Surely from God is my love of thee.
Crown'd with derision and pain thy glory
Greater yet than of yore shall be.

Eire, O Eire, my mother chosen,
Make me thy foster-child this day.
Call me, oh, call me thy son, and keep me
Thine in the love of the Cross alway.

Summer, 1921.

OCTOBER

I

MY own October, ever held I dear,
Thou many-gleaming sunset of the year,
Thy calm old age, so blithely sober,
My own October.

II

My own month natal, if they say thou art,
Here at the death-sigh of the year's spent heart,
His last attendant, dark and fatal,
My own month natal,

III

What, then? Why grieve we? If Life's deathless Sun
Shall smile the dying year's pale face upon,
And thou his priest art, as believe we,
Why grieve we?

THE WASTED YEARS

THE wasted years, the wasted years,
No purpose firm, no contrite tears
Can ever bring to me again
The wasted years, the squander'd grain.

The wasted years, the wasted years,
The source of looming, frowning fears,
Pursue me, threatening to bear
My foolish soul unto despair.

The wasted days, the wasted days,
A storm of dust along the ways,
Vain, devastating, venom-fraught,
The busy pursuance of naught ;

The wasted hours, the wasted hours,
Of sinful thoughts and squander'd powers,
The wasted moments millionfold,
The wasted dower of grace untold ;

The certain death, the nearing doom—
The crucifix dispels the gloom,
From wanhope and mistrust doth keep
The prodigal, the hundredth sheep.

MARY'S MEADOW

Jesus cum Maria
Sit nobis in via

(TO A. O'C. AND V. O'C.)

OUR Lady's month the time, her image seen
Above the doorway of the house, whose name
Is hers and doth to all who come proclaim
This is her dwelling, this her Son's demesne.

Room after room her imag'd presence fills,
Together with her Son's, whose Holy Face
Pleads, watches, follows you in every place
And recollection silently instils.

Our Lady's garden, touch'd with blue and red,
And white and gold on golden-hearted green ;
The guardian river in his stony bed
Rippling with cloistral calm, austere, serene.

Steep bank, shrub-hidden path that climbs
To your sequester'd nest among the stars,
Discourse of many nations, many times,
Art, human story, Michael, Mammon, Mars.

O Mary's month and Mary's meadow blest,
Blest hours henceforward forming part of me,
Blest clients of Our Lady, happy guest
Your happy debtor aye henceforth to be.

LOURDES

AMID the deepening combat came a call :
" Come thou apart, behold awhile and see
The battle set, the certain victory,
And know indeed that God is over all.

" Know thou and see the menace of the foe
As broken foam on Peter's steadfast rock,
His seeming triumph but an idle mock,
The mark ordain'd he may not overgo.

"Know thou and heed His unforsaking care,
Poor weakling, of thyself and all thy ways,
Who fashion'd thee and set thy term of days,
Behold and mark and thou shalt not despair.

" And I, poor stumbling child, have care of thee.
Can I forsake when ne'er my Son forsook ?
On thee at Lourdes a Mother's smile shall look,
And thou return to combat presently."

July, 1921.

SUFFOLK

(TO MY COUSIN, P. M. C.)

WHEN you and I were children long ago
We lov'd the Suffolk coastland wild and free,
The waves of heather and the lonely sea,
Wide fens, and dykes, and reedy waters slow;

We lov'd the stately windmills' strength and grace,
And ah! the gallant pines that guard your home,
Whereto shy crimson crossbills oft would come,
Ah! world-withdrawn, sun-flooded, happy place!

The crumbling cliff of Dunwich, and her church,
Grey tower and roofless nave of her last shrine,
Long since, they tell me, tumbled in the brine;
The beach that yielded agates to our search;

The vast, imperial tapestry of sky,
With myriad, myriad stars all overdight,
The wide horizons and the afterlight
Of sunset in those summers long gone by;

The flinten towers of many a far-seen thorp,
Upstanding white and clean in windswept air:
Ah! memories how dear of days how fair,
Of childhood's life the very woof and warp.

I have not seen them more this many a year,
Yet the same sky that is their life I see,
The arch of God's serene eternity
O'er thee and me and all our mortal sphere.

THE NEOPHYTE

(TO V. D. B.)

ON thee in far-off Hampstead at this hour
The freedom of God's city is bestow'd ;
The lustral waters o'er thy brow have flow'd,
Thy brow that bears henceforth the Sign of power.

God's own rood-token signs and seals His own.
Thy feet upon the narrow road are set,
The long rough road that goes by Olivet,
And reaches to the Everlasting Throne.

Could time run back, I fain would win again
Twice seven years and more time-overflow'd,
That not one grace should prove in vain bestow'd
Of all I lost, of all receiv'd in vain.

But thy homecoming fills me with new joy,
New heart is mine at thy new liberty ;
New child of God, thou hast arous'd in me
New courage 'mid the bitter world's annoy.

God speed thy course from strength to strength, O friend
(For with that name thyself didst honour me),
Till thy obedience speak of victory,
Thy song declare the triumph without end.

November, 1921.

SUBIACO REMEMBERED

(TO E. B. H.)

THRICE dear thy greeting, friend most dear ;
Thy true heart beating
Across the tide of time I hear
In thy new greeting.

Thrice dear thy song is, wherein joy
Withouten wrong is.
Amid the bitter world's annoy
Thrice dear thy song is.

Or ever slaughter fill'd our age
By land and water—
Ah ! who on that glad pilgrimage
Could think of slaughter ?—

Or ever pillage, ruin, fire
On town and village,
Made Christendom one funeral pyre,
One wreck and pillage ;

With one another that realm we trod,
With thy dear brother,
Where Benet and the call of God
Found one another,

That peaceful fastness in the hills,
High o'er the vastness
Of mountain ranges, brawling rills,
That heavenly fastness.

SUBIACO REMEMBERED

Life was before us, then, and blue
The heaven o'er us ;
From shrine to shrine, from dew till dew,
The road before us.

Oh ! to be faring, young and strong,
For news not caring,
By fountainheads of grace and song,
On foot a-faring !

A glimpse of heaven, beckoning on,
To us was given.
Such glimpse must needs be swiftly gone,
Lest we lose heaven ;

Lest we delaying dally here
In dreams unstaying ;
Their *vigilate* fills our ear,
Glad undelaying.

No distance ever from his friend
True friend can sever.
God bring us soon unto the end
That ends not ever.

TO ST. AGNES

ALL down the thronging years
With joy too deep for tears
Thou dost thy blissful light impart
To Rome's for ever captive heart,
Sweet Martyr, holy Agnes.

O radiant spotless child,
Amid a world defil'd
Thou passest o'er the fearful scene,
Blithe maiden and majestic queen,
Sweet Martyr, holy Agnes.

Serene and happy soul,
The world thou dost control,
The wicked city bows to thee,
Captiv'd by utter purity,
Sweet Martyr, holy Agnes.

Thou seemest not to feel
The searing flame or steel,
Nor Satan's rage nor world nor crowd
Athwart thy sunshine casteth cloud,
Sweet Martyr, holy Agnes.

For perfect charity
Hath cast out fear from thee.
Thou from thyself thyself hast bann'd,
Already safe within God's hand,
Sweet Martyr, holy Agnes.

TO ST. AGNES

Thou last and crowning grace
Of all the Claudian race,
Of earthly princes after-flow'r,
Princess of Heaven's court this hour,
Sweet Martyr, holy Agnes.

See, holy maiden, see
Earth's homage unto thee
Breaks forth in waves of almond spray
Along the lov'd Nomentan way,
Sweet Martyr, holy Agnes.

See children's faces bright
With thy reflected light,
And sinners in thy pleading smile
Grow little children free from guile,
Sweet Martyr, holy Agnes.

ST. ALBAN'S

(FOR M. H.)

RED in the sunset glows the minster tower
Of Roman brick above grey English stone,
The city bears his name unto this hour
Whose faith for centuries she has not known.

O holy martyr, shall the hallow'd spot,
Where thou wast born again to God in death,
No more return to Him? Ah! shall she not,
Who lies soul-dead, again draw vital breath?

Or shall thy name once more be understood?
Ah! shall thy glorious minster once again
Upraise the altar where thou gav'st thy blood,
Once more the Holy Sacrifice regain?

Back into heathendom she reels apace,
Thy Britain, yet our prayers go up each hour.
Dear Martyr, win this miracle of grace,
That Faith's new sunshine flood the Roman tower.

THE LATE EMPEROR KARL OF AUSTRIA

BRAVE knight of peace, brave prince of equity,
True lover of thy country and thy kind,
The world despis'd and after pitied thee,
"Fate's plaything," "victim of ambition blind."

To thee a better triumph God has given.
Despoil'd, dethron'd, and banisht, thou hast won
Thy life here lost, oblation dear to Heaven,
And sown on earth a future benison.

May, 1922.

THE COST

HEARTSICK with hope deferr'd and friendship riven,
Reviling, heartless scorn and foul despite
By those we sought to serve in guerdon given—
Accept, and ye shall find the burden light.

No anchor holds that grips the ground of time,
No flower of hope but falleth frail and fleet
Till planted in Heaven's viewless, deathless clime—
Who look not back shall find the yoke is sweet.

September, 1922.

RETURNING FROM LOURDES

(June 25, 1922)

BUT one day since I knelt where Bernadette
Receiv'd the message of the Queen of Heaven.
But one day since upon the stone I set
My lips unworthy where the saint was given
To kneel. Oh ! may my boldness be forgiven.

The world slips from us there with all its riot
Forgotten wholly ; angels there compel
Our wandering minds into the haven of quiet,
Mother of God, our souls securely dwell
In thy domain, inviolate of hell.

Oh ! might I stay there to the very end,
Mother of God, protected there by thee !
Mother of Mercy, while my knees I bend
Might the death-angel thither come for me,
Whenso God wills my latest breath to be !

Must I return unto the loathèd world,
With its unceasing clamour be alway
Assail'd, amid its vain confusion hurl'd,
Who knelt at Heaven's gate but yesterday ?
Meet is my penance, in the world to stay.

Dear Heaven on earth, amid earth's banishment
Home of my soul, to praise thee should I fail,
Dumbness my portion be, to Lourdes who went
At His behest, Who gave us, lest we quail,
The fount of life and hope at Massabielle.

"THAT ONLY NIGHT IN ALL THE YEAR"

(Midnight Mass, Plowden Hall, Christmas, 1921)

THE road of life is rough, lest we forslow
Our time of sojourning and reach not home.
Dark lowering clouds discounsel us to roam,
Abiding city have we none below.

But ever and anon the clouds are riven,
The flooding sunlight's boundless empery,
The myriad-starry splendour of the sky
By day or night afford us glimpse of heaven.

But most of all that night is heaven to me
When all is husht and still in field and wood,
Yet tense as though all nature understood
How instant-near her Lord's nativity.

There is a silence otherwhiles unknown
With thrill of expectation quivering.
Ah! were our ears attun'd, the angels sing
E'en now, and not in Palestine alone.

Not mine angelic idiom to translate,
None but the Saints of God such task essay.
But mine to-night to hearken on the way
To that dear shrine to Francis dedicate.

Here in this faithless land, where, few and leal,
A remnant kept the lamp of Faith alight,
The watching fields and woodlands thrill to-night
With harmony my inmost soul must feel.

Nearer and nearer wheels the midnight hour
When Thy Almighty Word from heaven leapt down,
Who takes our tiny gifts and prayers for crown,
Our feeble prayers in Mary's recreant dower.

Pass swiftly onward, sacred rite, and bring
The long'd-for silence of the sacring-bell,
His very presence in our midst to tell,
The Babe of Bethlehem, Almighty King.

Now would we fain bid time halt utterly,
This point of time we would eternalise.
On Tabor's height, that thrills with Paradise,
Would we might tabernacle, Lord, with Thee!

Ah, no! Not yet the victory, not yet.
The lifelong battle rages in the plain,
Ere we go down to combat once again
Here at Thy crib our offer'd hearts we set.

HANSELS OF HEAVEN

"Dieses Haus steht in Gottes Hand,
Maria Hilf wird es genannt."

On a house at Oswitz.

WHEN in the fields of memory I roam
In moods of holiday and home,
Full oft to Oswitz have I lookt and turn'd
Again my steps that backward yearn'd.

In sight of Breslau, yet in peace profound,
With marsh and woodland girdled round,
Each spring she sees her fair domain once more
With cherry blossom flooded o'er ;

Manorial barns of dark age-mellow'd red,
Fair cots in gardens trim bestead ;
The walled Oder flowing swiftly by,
The roadside Rood her gates anigh.

Crowning a shady knoll, her chapel stands,
Uplifting consecrated hands
To bless the place, the people dwelling there,
The pilgrim and the stranger's prayer.

And further south, yet washt by Oder stream,
Beneath her belfry-tower adream,
Ah ! would I might but once more contemplate
Thrice-dear, world-hidden Margareth.

See, where Our Lady's homely image stands,
The village children's loving hands
Have laid their gather'd bluebells at her feet,
Our Heavenly Mother's smile to greet.

O Queen of Heaven, thrice dear, I ween, to thee
Must those frail woodland blossoms be,
E'en such a heart as theirs I impetrate,
The children's hearts at Margareth.

"HAPPY UNALLOY'D MOMENTS I WOULD ETERNALISE"

M. Arnold.

HOW often in life's pilgrimage we find
A day we're loth to leave behind,
Some cool rock-shadow in a weary land,
Some sunswept moor or strand.

For me, how gladly shall I aye remember
That afternoon in late September
At Mary's Meadow in your company,
Laid up in memory.

And most the latest glimpse of that glad day,
Two little children blithe at play,
Who sought in heapèd hay to smother
And bury one another.

Their shouts, their smiles are music that endures,
No siren song that lulls and lures,
That guileless glee on this sad earth
In Paradise had birth.

Ah! little children, ye have taken me
Your captive all unwittingly;
Then lead me to your angels too,
That I may homage do.

September, 1922.

PIUS XI.

HE lov'd the mountains, on whose brow serene
Reflection of that primal glory stay'd,
When Adam walkt with God in Éden's glade,
Ere man or nature knew of curse or teen,
He lov'd the mountains' majesty serene.

He lov'd the garner'd wisdom of the past,
The harvest of the nations and the times,
Where saint with poet, seer with artist chimes ;
O'er one and all his winnowing gaze he cast,
One garner'd store of wisdom at the last.

He lov'd mankind, with charity on fire,
He gave his flock a watchful shepherd's care,
In many things found faithful manywhere.
And now the Master bids him go up higher,
And kindle wider yet His sacred fire.

February, 1922.

CORPUS CHRISTI

(Breslau, 1906, 1907)

THE ringing towers rock with clashing bells
And doubly throbs the living summer air;
The song of throstles fountainwise upwells,
And kneeling multitudes have fill'd the square;

And all the windows looking on the ways
With tapers bright a guard of honour set;
The banners forward go with songs of praise
That o'er the vanisht years are ringing yet;

Yea, and they ring for ever, till they merge
Their tributary being in the sea
Of those undying canticles that surge
About the throne of God eternally.

THE BELOVED CITY

SHOULD I forget thee, O Pontific Rome,
O chosen city of the King of Kings,
City of refuge, Peter's royal home.

Should I forget thee, O Pontific Rome,
Fair city that the living flood enrings,
Fast rock whereon the billows spend their foam

For ever vainly, evermore frustrate;
O city, whose high places stand engirt
With angel armies that untiring wait

Each sign from heaven, headlong from the gate
To drive thy foe or suffer him exert
His malice for an hour infatuate.

O City of our God, O Citadel
Of life, amid a death-devoted age
Encompass'd by the banner'd host of hell,

Whose rout God's chosen hour shall soon dispel,
Should I forget thee, suffrage none assuage
The penal years my thankless soul must tell.

Right soon the moment which the King hath set
For judgment shall thy royalty renew;
That royalty the world would fain forget

From long eclipse shall issue brighter yet.
O Holy City, who to thee is true
Unto the end, him will not God forget.

PR Rope, Henry Edward George
6035 The city of the Grail
0668605

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